Organizational, Community, and Societal Structures and Processes

Course Description

This theory and research based course is designed to support the foundation practice method courses which are taken concurrently in the first semesters. The general focus of this course is to present the various processes, connections and consequences that institutional structures and arrangements have on the various communities and at-risk-populations that are served by the social work profession. Students will develop an understanding of key professional and theoretical foundations for practicing social work. This course will also introduce students to the curricular themes and PODS concepts (i.e. Privilege, Oppression, Diversity, and Social Justice) that are infused in the advanced practice areas.

Course Content

The course uses the central social work values of social justice, multiculturalism, empowerment to generate a framework for the critical examination of theoretical perspectives of organizational, community, and societal structures and processes. The key theoretical foundations that will be discussed include social ecology, structural theory, risk/resiliency perspective, theories of poverty, social change and social justice, theories of political economy, and organizational theory. In examining these theoretical foundations, students will explore the intersectionality of race, gender, sex, sexual orientation, age, class, color, culture, ability, ethnicity, marital status, national origin, and religion, and how this intersectionality plays out in discrimination, oppression, and privilege.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1) Identify, describe, and critique selected theoretical perspectives on organizational, community, and societal structures and processes.
2) Describe and analyze:
   a) The impact that organizational structures and processes have on practice settings
b) How community and societal structures and processes impact the client groups served by social agencies

3) Describe how (PODS) privilege, oppression, diversity, and social justice are manifested in the structures and processes of society, communities, and complex organizations.

4) Analyze how the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation impact their own life experiences, their relationships with colleagues and supervisors, and their relationships with agency clientele and community groups.

5) Identify major processes and contemporary manifestations of oppression, discrimination, prejudice, power and privilege as they impact on populations-at-risk and vulnerable and oppressed groups by:
   a) describing barriers to organizational and community competence;
   b) identifying sources of intragroup and intergroup conflict stemming from cultural group membership;
   c) identifying the role of risk and protective social factors in relation to social problems and social/economic justice.

6) Apply professional values and ethics by:
   a) distinguishing differences among culturally sensitive, culturally competent, multicultural, and ethnoconscious frameworks in social work;
   b) critically evaluating organizations, community, and societal structures and processes that seek to promote social and economic justice.

Course Design

Required readings will be selected by the instructor. Suggested references will be included for each session, along with a list of books related to this course. Selection of required readings, coursepack items, and texts will be made in coordination with instructors of the other HBSE foundation course instructors. Class room activities may include lectures, discussion, simulations, videos/films, group projects, case analyses, etc.

Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** will be addressed through presentation of theory and research about oppressed and at-risk populations, and the impact that community, organizational and societal functioning has on the well-being of these groups.
- **Social Justice and Social Change** will be covered in the empirical and theoretical literature that document socially just organizational, community, and societal structures and processes. Social change theories and strategies will be presented that demonstrate how we move toward a more socially just society.
- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation** will be addressed through discussion of programs and systemic interventions to prevent stress and oppression of individuals, families, and groups and enhance their quality of life and well-being. The role of risk, resiliency, and preventive social factors will be discussed in relations to social problems.
• Behavioral and Social Sciences Research will be reflected in the organizational, community, and societal theories that are presented in order to analyze the impact that the social environment has on individuals, families and groups.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:

This course will address ethical and value issues related to working with organizations, communities, and societal structures and processes. The NASW Code of Ethics will be used to inform practice in this area. Examples of ethical and value related issues will include: the social worker’s responsibility to promote the general welfare of society by preventing and eliminating discrimination, ensuring equal access to resources, expanding choices and opportunities for all persons, encouraging respect for diversity, advocating for changes in social policies, and encouraging informed participation by the public. In addition, issues related to organizations will be covered, such as preventing discrimination in the work place, improving agency policies and procedures, and increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of organizations.

Required Readings
The following books are required texts for the course. They are available for purchase in Shaman Drum bookstore on State Street and are on reserve in the School library. You can also find used copies available from Amazon.com.
- A coursepack of articles and book chapters available for purchase from Excel (on S. University, between E. University and Church).

Course Assignments, Requirements, and Grading
10% of your grade will be based on class participation – showing up for class is very important as is participation in a number of in-class/out-of-class group and individual activities.

Everyone will be assigned a specific date on which she/he will co-lead a half-hour discussion/experience/activity of the readings for that particular class date. The group will be responsible for jointly developing 3-5 discussion questions (which should be made available to the class) and for facilitating the actual discussion. This activity will not be formally graded, but will be considered as part of your class participation grade. If it is possible to find a fictional or non-fictional video/movie clip (of no longer than 7 minutes) which illustrates and/or illuminates some of the material in the readings, please feel free to include this video in your presentation.
For **class 5 and 6**, I would like the presenters to focus on Barbara Ehrenreich’s book. For Class 5, looking at the “barriers to community competence” she encounters; and for Class 6, looking specifically at the ways in which the author and her co-workers were disempowered and/or empowered. For **Class 9 (on Nov. 8)**, I would like the presenters to clearly and specifically integrate the concepts from *The Tipping Point* into the presentation. **For Class 11 (on Nov. 22)**, I would like the presenters to specifically integrate the concepts from *Leadership and Self-Deception* (in the Coursepack) into the presentation.

Your presentation should have specific learning objectives that include:

a. “terms” (actual terms from the readings);

b. “facts” (important facts you feel the class should remember); and

c. “principles of practice” actual practice principles revealed in the readings.

There will be three (3) written papers for the course. Each paper is worth 30% of your course grade. The requirements for each paper will be explained in detail at least 3 weeks prior to the due date. If you have a creative idea for one of the papers, please come up with a 1-2 paragraph proposal which explains your idea AND explains how your idea will address/embrace the basic premises of the assignment. This kind of creativity is welcome! Papers will be marked down 5% for every day late. A paper is late after 8:10AM on the day it is due. The papers will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Systematic and logical presentation of arguments;
- Appropriate use of evidence;
- Familiarity with and appropriate use of relevant literature and concepts;
- Clarity and coherence of presentation;
- Originality and creativity;
- Conformity with the requirements of the assignment.

I am not interested or impressed by lengthy papers that exceed the page limit or meet the page limit exactly. In many instances, the conciseness of a paper indicates that it has been well organized and well contemplated.

If you are unhappy with your grade, you can turn in a rewrite of Papers 1 & 2 no later than 1 week after it is returned to you. All changes should be highlighted and you should also turn in a copy of your original paper. Paper 3 cannot be rewritten.

**Assignment 1 – Examination of self in relation to the macro world. – Due Oct. 4**

This assignment asks you to examine yourself and your background in relation to the macro world and the material in this course. Details will be provided in class.

**Assignment 2 – Multicultural Conceptions of Community – Due November 8**

This assignment utilizes literary and social science sources to examine different perspectives on the nature of community. Each student will select a novel (or anthology
of short stories) that explores the role of community in the lives of individuals, families, and groups. The assignment will require students to compare and contrast the conception of community presented in the novel with their own perspective(s) on community in the context of a theoretical perspective on community drawn from the course readings. A list of potential readings will be distributed in class. Students may also suggest additional titles. **Note:** Students must select a book that describes a racial, ethnic, or cultural group different from themselves. Further details will be provided in class.

**Assignment 3 – Community/Organizational Theory and Change – Due Dec. 6**

This assignment requires students to explore the utility of a theoretical perspective on community or organizational change in the context of their field placement agencies. Details will be provided in class.

All assignments should be **5-8 double-spaced, typewritten pages (using a 12-point font)**. Sources used must be cited using the appropriate citation format. Note that two important criteria for the evaluation of each assignment are that its emphasis must be on analysis, and not merely description; and that the paper apply concepts and theories covered in class and required readings.

**Class Schedule and Readings (CP = Reading in Coursepack)**

The chapters and articles are to be read by the date under which they are listed in the Schedule. Example: On September 13, you need to come to class having read the first 6 chapters of Mullaly.

**Class 1**  
**September 6**  
**Introduction to the Course**  
**Basic Goals and Concepts**

**Class 2**  
**September 13**  
**Theories of Society and Social Welfare**

Reading:
- Mullaly, chapters 1-6.

**Paper 1 assigned**

**Class 3**  
**September 20**  
**Theories of Society and Social Welfare II:**  
**Analyzing Poverty**

**Class 4**  
**September 27**  
**Defining and understanding communities**

Readings:
- (CP) B. Reed, “Theorizing in Community Practice,” 84-102.
Paper 2 Assigned

Class 5  October 4  Barriers to Community Competence. Theories Underlying Community Change

Readings
- (CP) M. Payne, Chapter 11, “Feminist Perspectives,” 251-269

Guest Lecture: University of Michigan LGBT Office on Community change-efforts and theory that underlies community change

Paper 1 Due

Class 6  October 11  Community Political Systems and Power

Reading:
- Ehrenreich, “Cleaning in Maine.”

October 18=Winter Break

Class 7  October 25  Ideology, multiculturalism, and Community

Readings:

Class 8  Nov. 1  Community Change and Community Organizing on the Neighborhood Level

Reading:
- (CP) Johnson, Chapters 3, “The Trouble We’re In: Privilege, Power and Difference,” pp. 15-41

**Guest Lecture: Safehouse on Community organizing and how community conflict can be managed**

**Assign Paper 3**

**Class 9** November 8  
**Community Change and Community Organizing on the Neighborhood Level II**

**Reading**

- The Tipping Point: Introduction, Chapters 1,2

**Class 10** November 15  
**Theories of Organizations and Organizational Practice I**

**Reading**

- Ehrenreich, “Selling in Minnesota” and “Evaluation”
- The Tipping Point, Chapters 3,4 (you can skim Chapter 3 – if you wish!)

**ASSIGNMENT 2 IS DUE**

**Class 11** November 22  
**Theories of Organizations and Organizational Practice II**

**Reading**

- (CP) E. Mulroy, “Theoretical Perspectives on the Social Environment,” 77-95.
- (CP) Arbinger Institute, Leadership and Self-Deception, 1-48
Guest Appearance I: “Talk to Us”

Class 12   November 29   Theories of Community and Organizational Development and Change I

Readings:
• The Tipping Point, Chapters 5, 7

WED: Guest Lecture: Community Action Network on how diversity and multicultural sensitivity can be integrated into organizational structure

Class 13   December 6   Interorganizational Relations

Readings:
• (CP) T. Reitan, “Theories of Interorganizational Relations in the Human Services,” 285-309.

WED: Guest Lecture: Community Action Network on how diversity and multicultural sensitivity can be integrated into organizational structure

Assignment 3 due

Class 14   December 13   Theories of Community and Organizational Development & Change II

Readings:
• Mullaly, Chapter 9, “Working Within (And Against) the System,” 163-186.
• (CP) M. Payne, Chapter 14, “Empowerment and Advocacy,” 295-315
• The Tipping Point, Chapters 5, 7

Guest Appearance II: “Talk to Us”